

<http://www.photosecrets.com/tips.html>

How To Take Better Photos

Beginner

[What Camera Should I Buy?](#)

[What Makes a Postcard-Perfect Photograph?](#)

[How To Take Better Photographs Of People](#)

[How Do I Compose A Photograph?](#)

[Photographing Memories of a Trip](#)

[Special Effects with a Point-and-Shoot Camera](#)

[How Do I Photograph Fireworks?](#)

Intermediate

[Ten Tips for Better Pictures](#)

[How To Photograph People](#)

[What Makes A Great Shot](#)

[Advanced Tips](#)

[How To Photograph Anything](#)

[Getting Technical](#)

[How To Get Stock Quality Shots](#)

[Time Of Day](#)

[Equipment: What To Take](#)

Advanced

[Postcard Photography](#)

By James Blank

[Aerial Photography](#)

By James Blank

[Aerial Photography Q & A](#)

By John Bahu

[Favorite Filters](#)

[Ten Tips for Travel Photographers](#)

By Bob Krist

[Five Pro Tips](#)

Composition, color, lighting, depth, research, and other ideas.

[Treasures of California](#)

Favorite places in the Golden State.

[The Best Photo Tip I Ever Got](#)

By Bob Couey

[Planning and Patience](#)

By Bob Couey

Ten Tips

By Andrew Hudson

*"The [35mm] camera is for life and for people,
the swift and intense moments of life."- Ansel Adams*

1. Hold It Steady

A problem with many photographs is that they're blurry. Avoid 'camera shake' by holding the camera steady. Use both hands, resting your elbows on your chest, or use a wall for support. Relax: don't tense up. You're a marksman/woman holding a gun and it must be steady to shoot.

2. Put the Sun Behind You

A photograph is all about light so always think of how the light is striking your subject. The best bet is to move around so that the sun is behind you and to one side. This front lighting brings out color and shades, and the slight angle (side lighting) produces some shadow to indicate texture and form.

3. Get Closer

The best shots are simple so move closer and remove any clutter from the picture. If you look at most 'people' shots they don't show the whole body so you don't need to either. Move close, fill the frame with just the face, or even overflow it. Give your shot some impact. Use a zoom to crop the image tighter.

4. Choose a Format

Which way you hold the camera affects what is emphasized in your shot. For tall things (Redwoods, Half Dome) a vertical format emphasize height. Use a horizontal format to show the dramatic sweep of the mountains.

5. Include People

Photographs solely of landscape and rocks are enjoyable to take but often dull to look at. Include some of your friends, companions, family, or even people passing by, to add human interest. If there's no one around, include yourself with the self-timer.

Have you ever got your photos back only to discover that something that looked awe-inspiring at the time looks dull on paper? This is because your eye needs some reference point to judge scale. Add a person, car, or something of known size to indicate the magnitude of the scenery.

6. Consider Variety

You may take the greatest shots but if they're all the same type or style, they may be dull to look at. Spice up your collection by adding variety. Include landscapes and people shots, close ups

and wide angles, good weather and bad weather. Take personal shots that remember the 'being there' - friends that you meet, your hotel/campsite, transportation, street or hiking signposts.

7. Add Depth

Depth is an important quality of good photographs. We want the viewer to think that they're not looking at a flat picture, but through a window, into a three-dimensional world. Add pointers to assist the eye. If your subject is a distant mountain, add a person or a tree in the foreground. A wide angle lens can exaggerate this perspective.

8. Use Proportion

The beauty of an image is often in its proportions. A popular technique with artists is called the Rule of Thirds. Imagine the frame divided into thirds, both horizontally and vertically, like a Tic-Tac-Toe board. Now place your subject on one of the lines or intersections. Always centering your subject can get dull. Use the Rule of Thirds to add variety and interest.

9. Search for Details

It's always tempting to use a wide angle lens and 'get everything in'. However, this can be too much and you may lose the impact. Instead, zoom in with a longer lens and find some representative detail. A shot of an entire sequoia tree just looks like a tree. But a shot of just the tree's wide base, with a person for scale, is more powerful.

10. Position the Horizon

Where you place the horizon in your shot affects what is emphasized. To show the land, use a high horizon. To show the sky, use a low horizon. Be creative.

How to Photograph People

By Andrew Hudson

There are several factors to consider when photographing people:

Location

The first thing to do is find your location. Choose a spot with a simple, medium-toned background. Tree foliage, grass or the ocean works well. For darker skin, look for a similarly dark background to keep the highlight (and thus the camera's exposure) on the face. Minimize patterns, shapes and colors. Keep that background simple, or include a famous landmark.

Lighting

Get the sun behind you and to one side. If it's bright, put people in the shade (harsh, direct sunlight washes out the face). If it's dark in the shade, use the fill-flash feature to brighten up the face.

The best time is the late afternoon as it gives a nice, warm, golden glow. At other times, with an SLR camera, you can simulate this glow with an 81B or C filter.

A popular technique is to put your subject in the shade, then use fill-flash to lighten up the face. Bring a small reflector or white card reflect sunlight into the harsh shadow areas.

Occasionally, having the sun shine from behind the subject (backlighting) looks good as it creates a halo through the hair, showing form and drawing the face out of the background.

If you're shooting indoors with an SLR, 'bounce' the flash off a wall or ceiling for more natural lighting. A separate hand-held flash is best and can be positioned far enough away from the lens to avoid red eye.

Lens

If you have an SLR, use a 135mm or similar lens for the most pleasing perspective. Use the widest aperture (lowest f-number) to blur the background and highlight the face for a movie-like look. If the background is important, use a small aperture (high f-number) to get everything in focus.

Positioning

Get close. Don't include their full body but zoom straight in to the face. For close ups, crop out the top of the head and overfill the frame. Being at eye level usually works best, so for children, kneel down.

Proportion

Generally try to keep the eyes, not necessarily the head, in the center of the frame. If the person is looking slightly to one side, add extra space to that side.

If your subject is to one side and there's a lot of contrast in the shot, you might need to control the exposure. To do this, zoom or close in on your subject (perhaps a person's face) then press the exposure lock button. Keep this button pressed down while you recompose and take your shot.

Relax Your Subject

Get your subject relaxed and happy. For friends or family, remind them of a silly event. With children, give them something to play with. For local people, ask them about the location, their job or skill, or complement their clothes. People hate waiting while you adjust your camera so always plan the shot and adjust your camera first, before asking people to pose.

Fun Shots

To add fun and action to a shot, hold the camera at an angle - 30 degrees with the right side up works well. It looks as though the photographer was caught off guard, emphasizing danger and action, and is great for parties! Stage a joke shot by pretending to interact with a statue. Or use a wide angle lens to distort the face.

Action

If your subject is moving (on a cable car or bicycle), deliberately blur the background to emphasize speed, excitement and urgency. Track the subject with your camera and, if you have an SLR, use a medium to slow shutter speed (1/60s). This will blur the background and, optionally, also your subject. Using the flash (particularly a 'rear-curtain sync' feature if your camera has one) helps freeze the subject in a moving background.

Don't Forget You!

The problem with being the photographer is that you end up not being in your own photographs. Remind the viewer what you look like and ask someone else to take a shot. You can arrange a photograph by propping the camera on a small tripod or wall (use stones, paper or coins for adjustment) and using the self timer.

What Makes a Great Shot?

By Andrew Hudson

Photography is the perfect companion to travel. It encourages us - as travelers - to discover an area; it provides tangible memories of the trip; and it is an enjoyable way to express ourselves in art.

A camera is really an excuse to delve deeper into a place than we otherwise would. Looking for a good shot forces us to seek out the unique features and scenic beauty of a location, to explore further, and to interact with our surroundings. When you press the shutter release, you're making a personal connection to the place and its people. You are there. Photographs preserve the memories of our trip. We can show others the exciting places we've been, the wonderful scenery, and the great people we met. Our minds are triggered by images and reviewing our photographs helps everyone on the trip relive its adventures and misadventures. Taking pictures is also a very accessible artform. With a little thought and effort you can create captivating images of your own creation and interpretation.

The Secret of Photography

Fortunately, taking good photographs has little to do with owning expensive equipment and knowing technical data. The secret is in seeing. Ask yourself: What do I look at, and how do I see it? A good photograph has qualities that display the skill, art, interests, and personality of the photographer.

What Makes A Good Photograph?

A photograph is a message. It conveys a statement ("Here we are in ..."), an impression ("This is what ... looks like"), or an emotion. You are an author trying to convey this message in a clear, concise, and effective way. But how?

Like any message, you first need a subject. This may be your traveling companions, a building, a natural vista, or some abstract form. The subject is the central point of interest and is usually placed in the foreground of the shot (towards the viewer). Now we compose the message by including a second element, a context, which is often the background. The context gives the subject relevance, presence, location, or other interest. It is the combination of the two elements - subject and context, foreground and background - that tells the message.

Just as important as knowing what to include, is knowing what to exclude. Anything that isn't part of the subject or its context is only a distraction, cluttering up the image and diluting the message. So eliminate extraneous surroundings - usually by moving closer to the subject - and make a clear, tidy shot. A painter creates art by addition - adding more paint - whereas a photographer creates art by subtraction - removing unnecessary elements.

The recipe for a good photograph is:

"A foreground, a background, and nothing else."

What Makes A Great Photograph?

A great photograph is piece of art. It captures the spirit of a subject and evokes emotion. Bob Krist calls it "The Spirit of Place." You are an artist that can use subtle tricks to appeal to your viewer's senses. Let's see how.

A picture is a playground, with places for our eyes to wander and investigate, plus spaces for them to rest and relax. When we first see something, we are defensive. Our eyes instinctually find light, bright areas, and look for people, particularly their eyes and mouth. Do we know the people in the picture? What are they feeling, and how does this relate to us? Are they drawing attention to something? If so, do we recognize it (a building, a landmark) and what does it look like? What is this picture about? What is the main subject or objective? How big is the subject? We determine scale by comparing elements to something of known size, such as a person, animal, or car. Once we've checked for people, we turn our attention to more abstract features.

We first notice the subject's color or tone. Firey red, calming blue, natural green, foreboding black. Then we see shape. Soft curves, hard edges, sweeping lines. How the light strikes the subject gives subtle hints as to its three-dimensional form. You, as a photographer, can manipulate this by searching for shades and shadows, shifting intensities of tone and hues. How is the eye drawn into the picture?

Form leads us to texture, how the subject might feel to the touch. Is it soft, is it smooth, hard, or rough? Does it have character and warmth? The way the elements are juxtaposed and affected by the same light, makes us consider their qualities and interrelation. Balance draws our eye from one element to another, investigating their unity, contrast, and detail, each item adding pleasure to the next. What is the relevance of everything?

The overall composition, the proportions of layout, denotes importance of the elements. As the artist, you can decide which features appeals to you, and how best to emphasize them.

*The recipe for a great photograph is:
"Consider how the parts interrelate with the whole".*

Advanced Tips

By Andrew Hudson

"Emphasis on technique is justified only so far as it will simplify and clarify the statement of the photographer's concept". - Ansel Adams

1. Use a Narrow Tonal Range

Cameras can't handle a wide tonal range. When you photograph very bright things and very dark things together (sunlight in water and shadows in trees) the camera will lose all the detail and you'll end up with stark overexposed white and total underexposed black. Instead, look for mid-tones with little difference between the brightest and darkest highlights. Flowers and trees for example are often best photographed on overcast, drizzly days.

Your eye can handle a difference in brightness (a 'dynamic range') of about 2,000:1 (11 camera 'stops'), while some digital cameras can only handle a range of 8:1 (3 stops). Ansel Adams' 'Zone System' divided light levels into 11 'zones' and advised using a narrow zone (or tonal) range.

2. Work The Subject, Baby!

As movie directors say, film is cheap (although it's not always their money!). Work the subject and take different shots from different angles. The more you take, the more likely you are to get a good one. Don't be afraid to take ten shots and edit out nine later. Find different, unusual viewpoint. Shoot from high and from low. It's often said that the only difference between a professional photographer and an amateur photographer is that the professional throws more shots away. National Geographic magazine uses only 1 out of every 1,000 shots taken.

3. Hyperfocal

A popular 'pro' technique is capture great depth by combining a close foreground and deep background. Use a wide angle lens (20-28mm), get a few inches from the foreground (often flowers), put the horizon high in the frame. Using a small aperture (f22) keeps everything in focus (hyperfocal). Use a hyperfocal chart to correspond distance with aperture, or just use the smallest (highest f-number) possible.

4. Expose For Highlights

When a scene has a mixture of very bright and very dark areas the light meter in your camera will have difficulty finding the right exposure. In such high-contrast shots, try to expose for the highlights. To do this, walk up to, zoom in to, or spot meter on the most important bright area (a face, sky, detail) and half-depress the shutter release button to hold the exposure (exposure lock). Then recompose and take the shot. To be on the safe side, take several 'bracketed' shots.

5. Bracketing

SLR only

Always expose for the most important highlight. When in doubt about the correct exposure, take several 'bracketed' shots. You 'bracket' around a shot by taking one regular shot, then a second shot slightly darker (-1 stop) and a third shot slightly lighter (+1 stop). Some cameras offer this as an automatic feature.

How to Get Deep Colors

1. Use a polarizer filter
2. Shoot in the late afternoon
3. Use a 'saturated' camera setting
4. Use a narrow tonal range

How to Photograph Anything

By Andrew Hudson

Buildings

To minimize the angular distortions of looking upwards, always look for a high viewpoint. Ascend stairs, stand on top of another building or the crest of a hill. If you can't get high, stand far back.

Use the widest angle you have (24-30mm). Bright blue skies are to offset the gray of the building. A polarizer cuts down on window reflections. Try to include people for scale and human interest.

Look for interesting details, often around the doorway, columns or windows. Zoom in and isolate the detail. Here the diffused light of an overcast day works best.

Interiors

Stand well back or shoot from outside through a window. The low-light dictate a long exposure, so load up with fast film. Bring a tripod if they're allowed or, if not, find a support (a wall, your friends shoulder, or lean against a doorway). Use a cable release, or the self-timer to avoid moving the camera.

Remember to switch off the flash if it is not allowed. If it is, you can bring up dark areas by firing a hand-held flash into them while the shutter is open. Natural lighting casts shadows for a tranquil atmosphere. Expose for the highlights.

Landscapes

Always have something in the foreground. This gives depth and scale - using a person also adds human interest. Look for a high vantage point such as a hotel balcony, roof-top restaurant, or wall. Late afternoon is usually best. Use a polarizer to enhance the sky. Haze increases with distance and this aerial perspective gives a subtle impression of distance and depth. Ansel Adams declared landscape photography to be the supreme test of the photographer.

Water

With sprayed water, use side- or backlighting for a translucent look. This also works well with smoke, grass and leaves.

Experiment with a slow shutter speed, perhaps 1/30 to 1/4s so that the rushing water creates a soft, romantic blur. I like 1/8s. A tripod or other support is necessary. Be careful with a polarizer - it can enhance the colors but it also removes reflections that you may want.

Sunsets

The best times are when the sun is just about to touch the horizon, and the afterglow 10-30 minutes after the sun has set. Usually automatic metering works fine, but with high contrast, meter off the brightest part of the sky. Try adding a person in the foreground (they'll appear as a silhouette) for human interest, depth and character. Either include a reflection from the ocean, or eliminate the scenery and keep the horizon low in the frame. A zoom lens is useful and you'll need a tripod or wall for support as the shutter speed will be slow.

Dusk and Night Shots

Dusk shots are best about 15-30 minutes after sunset, when there is still some color in the sky. To add depth, shoot from one end of a bridge or find some other feature coming towards you. A tripod is a necessity. Auto exposure usually works fine but also try manual exposure using a cable release and the 'B' (bulb - open) setting. Take several shots with 2, 4, 8, 12 and 16 seconds. Use an FL-D magenta filter to overcome the effect of tungsten lights on daylight film, and to add a pink to the sky.

In Bad Weather

Bad weather doesn't mean bad photographs, it just changes your options.

Overcast skies reduce contrast and are preferred for trees and foliage. Colors may appear cool and blueish so add an 81A, B, or C filter to warm up the image. If the sky is boring, disguise it with an overhanging tree, or exclude it completely by raising the horizon in your frame. When low clouds or rain reduce color saturation, try black and white film to emphasize the range of gray tones. You may need a faster film (ISO 200 or 400) since there's less light.

Storms and heavy rain add drama and power to an image. Dusk shots are improved with reflections of neon lights in puddles. Clouds create moving patterns of interesting highlights, particularly when a storm is clearing. Fog make lakes, rivers and valleys look ethereal and primordial.

Rain or snow makes people, kids especially, wear colorful clothing. Cover your camera with a coat, umbrella, or even put it in a plastic bag. In snow, give a slight overexposure (slower shutter speed or '+1') to keep the whites free from appearing dirty gray.

The F-Stops Here

By Andrew Hudson

A camera is your media, so the better you understand the media, the better your pictures are likely to be. The two most useful controls are:

1. **Focal Length** (the zoom of your lens), which affects how much of the view is included in the shot, and;
2. **Depth-Of-Field** (the f-stop of your lens), which affects how much of the foreground and background is in focus.

To use these techniques effectively, you need to understand lenses and exposure.

Lenses

The first thing to play with on most cameras is the lens. A long lens (say 210mm), allows you to zoom-in to your subject, to get close to it. A short lens (say 35mm), is often called a wide-angle lens because it allows you to zoom-out and get a wider view.

The numbers (e.g. 210mm) represent the focal length of the lens. This is the distance between the focal plane (film) and where the light rays appear to originate (when focused on infinity).

You can select the focal length based on what you want included in the shot, and how you want to portray depth. A short lens exaggerates depth, combining a close foreground with a deep background. This is a popular pro technique where a close foreground (flowers or roadway) sweeps back into the far horizon. To do this (called hyperfocal) you need a wide lens (say 20mm to 28mm) and a wide depth-of-field (small aperture such as f22 - see later).

A long lens on the other hand contracts the image, giving it narrow depth. Distant elements are put on the same focal plane, making them look closer together than they really are. This is useful to create a flat image, or to emphasize the scale of your background relative to your foreground.

Exposure - Four Factors

A camera is just a box with a hole in it. The correct exposure is determined by four factors:

1. How large this hole is (the aperture);
2. How long it stays open for (the shutter speed);
3. How quickly the camera reacts (the ISO), and;
4. How much light is reflected off the subject (the light level).

Fortunately, most cameras are automatic and will make all these decisions for you. However, higher-end cameras allow you to intervene to create particular effects. Its useful to understand how these four factors interact so that you can use them to your creative advantage.

Let's review each factor in turn (in order of usefulness) and see how it can improve your photography.

1. Aperture

Inside the lens is an adjustable device, the diaphragm, which alters the size of the opening - the aperture. Changing the aperture is useful as it has a handy side-effect. A very small aperture makes everything (background and foreground) in focus. A large aperture makes only the subject you're focused on in focus. Try squinting your eyes (everything is in focus) and then opening them wide (some things are blurry).

This zone of acceptably sharp focus extends both in front of and behind of the point of focus. It's called the depth-of-field. With landscapes, we usually want a wide depth-of-field to get both the background (hills or mountains) and the foreground (a flower or your traveling companions) in focus. With portraits, we want to emphasize the foreground (a person's face) so we make the background blurry by using a narrow depth-of-field.

How can you tell how much of the image is going to be in focus? The depth-of-field is affected by three things: the size of the aperture; the focal length of the lens; and the distance to the subject you're focused on (the focal distance). To make things easier, the first two items are combined to give us a field number, or f-number. The bigger the f-number (say f11 or f22), the bigger the depth-of-field (the wider the zone of focus).

2. Shutter Speed

Inside the camera is a mechanism (a shutter) which controls how long light is allowed to act on the film. When you take a photograph (by pressing the shutter-release), the shutter opens and then closes a fraction of a second later. How quickly this is done is called the shutter speed and is measured in seconds (shortened to s). A fast shutter speed (say 1/500th of a second) is good for action shots as it freezes movement. A slow shutter speed (say 1/60s) blurs moving objects, which is useful when you want to emphasize movement and speed.

Most of the time you will select a shutter speed based on the size of your lens. This is because when you hold a camera, you introduce unwanted movement, called camera shake, and how much of this shake is noticed on the photograph depends upon how much you are zoomed in.

A good rule of thumb says that you're safe with a shutter speed equal to, or faster than, the length of your lens. For example, with a wide lens of 35mm, you're fine with a shutter speed of 1/60s. But when zoomed in to 210mm, you need a faster shutter speed of 1/250s.

3. Light Level

The amount of light is usually set by mother nature. Generally, the brighter a view is, the better the photograph.

If someone is in the shade, you can add light to their face by using a flash unit. This is called fill-flash because it fills in some light. You can do the same thing with a reflective surface, such as white card or a purpose-made reflector.

If a sky is too bright, you can reduce the amount of light with a filter (such as a graduated neutral-density filter).

4. Camera Speed

How quickly the camera reacts to light is known as the speed. Digital cameras often have several speeds available, known as "ISO" settings, which can be chosen manually or automatically. ISO stands for the International Standards Organization which developed a system for film where a 200 ISO is twice as fast (i.e. it reacts twice as quickly) a 100 ISO. (You may have also heard of ASA or DIN - these were two other standards which were replaced by the ISO.)

Why not just have a fast ISO? There is a trade-off between speed and quality. Generally it is preferable to use a slower speed (say 100 ISO) as it gives a sharper image (a finer grain). But when there isn't enough light (indoors or at night), you'll need a faster speed (say 400 or 1600 ISO) and will have to suffer its less-distinct image (coarser grain).

Combining the Four Factors

To get the optimum exposure, you must consider all four factors - aperture, shutter speed, light level, and camera speed. Always remember that these four factors are all interrelated. When you set one, you must juggle the others to get the right exposure. Usually you'll be balancing your preferred aperture with a suitable shutter speed.

For example, say you're shooting a landscape with a 100mm lens set to f5.6. When you activate the light meter in your camera, based on the light level and the film speed, it recommends a shutter speed of 1/125s. So your factors are: f5.6, 1/125s, a fixed light level, and your film speed. The f5.6 aperture is giving you a medium depth-of-field - a blurry foreground to a sharp background.

Now let's say that you want both the background and the foreground elements to be in focus. You therefore select a larger f-number, going up a stop from f5.6 to f8. This halves the aperture, so, to compensate, you need to double the shutter-speed from 1/125s to 1/60s. You have successfully juggled your factors.

Unfortunately, this has now taken you past the slowest speed for your lens when hand-held (100mm => 1/100s) and will make a blurry image due to camera shake. So you either need to change to a wider-angle lens (say 50mm), change to a faster film, or find some support for your camera such as a wall or tripod.

Summary

Enhance the creativity of your photographs by intelligently choosing the length of your lens and its aperture.

How to Get Stock-Quality Shots

By Andrew Hudson

If you look at the sort of shots that get printed in travel magazines and expensive coffee-table books, they tend to share similar attributes. Look for pictures that you admire and try to analyze why you like them. These are some of the features I like:

Include People

Magazines in particular always like people in the shot. It gives the viewer a human connection, a sense of being there, and a sense of scale. Photographs evoke emotion and empathy comes with someone's face. Avoid crowds and simplify the shot down to one person. The young and old are preferred subjects, with their innocent expressions and weather-worn faces respectively. People make your shots warm, friendly, and personable. Just like you are.

Simple, Clear Layout

A good shot focuses your attention on the subject by using a sparse background and a simple but interesting composition. Always remove clutter for the picture - this is a real skill. Like a musician, it's always difficult to make things look easy. Zoom in, get close, get to eye level, find a simple backdrop, look for balance.

Bold, Solid Colors

'Stock-quality' images make great use of color. Look for solid primary colors: bright 'sports-car' red, emerald green, lightning yellow, and ocean blue. Use a polarizer to bring out the colors. Avoid patterns - keep it simple. Bright afternoon sunlight will add warmth. Alternatively, look for 'color harmony' - scenes restricted to similar tones and colors, or even a single color. This presents a calm, restful image where the eye plays with the differing shades and intensities. Look for pastels, cream, or delicate shades.

Depth

Always include some pointer about depth. A photograph is two-dimensional but we want it to appear three-dimensional. If you're shooting a background (mountains) include a strong foreground (people). If you're shooting people (foreground), add an out-of-focus blur behind them (by using a wide aperture - small f-number).

Use a wide-angle lens for exaggerated depth. With a 20mm to 28mm lens, get just a few feet from your subject and, with a small aperture (large f-number), include an in-focus deep background too. This exaggerated hyperfocal perspective is used in a lot of magazine shots. What impact!

Alternatively you can remove all depth by using a long, telephoto lens. This compresses or compacts the image, making your 3-D subject appear flat.

Dramatic Lighting

Photographs that win competitions are often ones that make interesting use of light. Look out for beams of light shining through clouds, trees or windows, long shadows, and the effect of side- and backlighting. Shoot in the warm golden "magic hours" of early morning and late afternoon.

Preparation

"Chance favors the prepared mind." - Louis Pasteur.

A great shot takes time. Scout out the area, make mental notes of important features, unusual and interesting angles, and changing crowd levels. Take time to prepare the shot. Get there before the best time of day, clean your lenses, set up a tripod or mini-tripod, add a cable release, try out different filters, wait for a good foreground, and talk with people who may be in the shot so that they're comfortable and will pose well.

Time of Day

By Andrew Hudson

The most important element to many great photographs is the lighting. Warmth, depth, texture, form, contrast, and color are all dramatically affected by the angle of the sunlight, and thus the time of day. Shooting at the optimum time is often the biggest difference between an 'amateur' and a 'professional' shot.

In the early morning and late afternoon, when the sun is low, the light is gold and orange, giving your shot the warmth of a log fire. Professional photographers call these the 'magic hours' and most movies and magazine shots are made during this brief time. It takes extra planning, but saving your photography for one hour after sunrise, or one to two hours before sunset, will add stunning warmth to your shots.

Plan Your Day

Assuming a sunrise at 6 am and sunset at 7 pm, and that your spouse/kids/friends suddenly give you the reverence and servility you so obviously deserve, a good day might be:

5 am: Pre-dawn: A pink, ethereal light and dreamy mist for lakes, rivers and landscapes.

6-7 am: Dawn: Crisp, golden light for east-facing subjects.

7 am-10 am: Early morning: The city comes to life; joggers in the park.

10-2 pm: Midday: The sun is too harsh for landscapes and people, but perfect for monuments, buildings and streets with tall buildings.

2 pm-4 pm: Afternoon: Deep blue skies with a polarizer.

4 pm-6:45 pm: Late Afternoon: Terrific warm, golden light on west-facing subjects. Best time for landscapes and people, particularly one hour before sunset.

6:45 - 7:30 pm: Sunset: Great skies 10 minutes before and 10 minutes after sunset.

7:30-8 pm: Dusk is great for skylines, while there's still a purple color to the sky.

9 pm: Night shots, or go to bed - you've got to be up early tomorrow!

How to Predict a Rainbow

Rainbows are scientific phenomena which can be accurately predicted. A rainbow occurs when sunlight passes through a fine spray, such as at the base of a waterfall, and is refracted into its component colors - red, orange, yellow, green, blue, indigo and violet.

You can see rainbows in Yosemite at the base of Vernal Fall and Bridalveil Fall in the late afternoon, when you're standing directly between the fall and the sun. A circular halo will form with a 42 degree radius, around a point exactly opposite the sun.

What to Take – Equipment

By Andrew Hudson

Standard Camera

A 'compact' or 'point-and-shoot' automatic camera makes life very easy as it is small and simple to operate. In fact, they're even preferable over more expensive 'SLR' cameras in some circumstances, such as when you need fast response, something less noticeable and intimidating (for photographing people), or something small and light (when walking around town or hiking). Some models have one fixed lens (usually a 30mm wide angle) which is the lens you'd use most on a more expensive camera. Other model also offer a second, telephoto lens, or a single zoom lens to help you capture details and make good portraits of people.

Look for a model that feels good in your hands and that you can understand how to operate. I like a very wide angle lens (24mm) to capture buildings and make big, punchy shots. A fill-flash feature is very useful to brighten people's faces. Other useful features include lockable autofocus (to focus on subjects which aren't in the center of the frame), a self-timer, and panoramic mode.

A Camera for the Experienced

The 35mm camera of choice for experienced photographers is the SLR - Single-Lens Reflex. This type of camera contains an angled mirror and prism to show you exactly the scene viewed by the lens. This is a benefit over the simple point-and-shoot camera (which has a separate viewfinder lens) as it allows you to better monitor the image.

The greatest benefits of an SLR camera is the ability to change lenses according to the situation, and to have manual control over focus, aperture and shutter-speeds. SLRs are typically more cumbersome, expensive, and technically demanding than a compact camera, but you are rewarded with increased flexibility and control.

Look for a model that feels comfortable and that you understand how to operate. I like a built-in flash, auto-focus capability, and aperture-priority mode (where you set the aperture and the camera determines the corresponding shutter speed). A light-weight design is valuable when you're traveling.

Read more about Cameras at <http://www.photosecrets.com/tips.camera.html>

1. Lenses

Most people start with a medium zoom lens, such as 35-80mm or 80-135mm, then a telephoto 100-210mm. The lens I use the most is a 24-35mm as you can do so much with it. About 80% of my photos are taken with a 28mm lens. Many professional like a 20mm lens, the exaggerated perspective adds great punch and depth to their shots.

A popular 'long' lens is 80-210mm. I prefer a 100-300mm telephoto as that extra 90mm seems to go a long way. You can use a 2x convertor to double the length but there are drawbacks. It adds two precious f-stops resulting in slower shutter speed, and decreases the optical quality by 10-20%. With such a long focal length you'll need a tripod.

2. Cases, Caps and Straps

Lenses are fragile and expensive so protect them with front and rear lens caps. Adding a UV or skylight filter to each lens serves as extra protection. If you're like me and prone to dropping things, it's cheaper to replace a damaged filter than a broken lens.

A strap can be useful for carrying the camera. It keeps your hands free while keeping the camera primed for action. A nice wide strap spreads the load. Personally however I prefer not to use a strap as it just gets in the way. Instead I carry the camera in a padded case.

Choose a camera case that carries all your kit and is well padded. Adjustable compartments and pockets are useful. Shoulder bags are popular but carrying the weight on one side all day can get uncomfortable. I prefer a backpack as it frees up both hands and makes it easier to travel.

Many professionals prefer a bag that also fits around the waist. This way, they have ready access to a range of lenses.

3. Filters

Your choice of filters, as with everything else, is one of personal preference. I use four filters - a standard polarizer, a blue-yellow polarizer, an FL-D filter and an 81B filter.

With the standard polarizer, rotating the filter gives deep blue skies and strengthens colors by removing glare and reflections. The blue-yellow is a good color enhancer, it makes skies electric blue and increases the amount of golden yellow on buildings. I use the FL-D filter on most sunsets and dusk shots as it adds a warm purple color to the sky. The 81B filter is good for warming up shots when you're shooting around midday.

Here are some other filters.

Color Enhancer

Enhances reds, but can leave a cold blue/violet cast and is expensive.

Color Correcting

Enhances particular colors - green is good to enhance foliage. For example, a CC20G adds 20% green by reducing other colors by 80%.

Single Color

Add an overall blue, orange or sepia cast to your shot.

81A, 81B or 81C

Simulates late afternoon light by adding an orange/brown cast. A is light, B medium, and C strong.

Haze 1 or Skylight 1A

Can reduce haze at high altitude. Skylight 1A adds a slight pink "warming" cast. Used often to protect lenses.

Neutral Density or Split-Field Neutral Density

Reduces the brightness of a scene, for better control of aperture. A split-field neutral density reduces a bright sky to match a shaded foreground.

Red or Yellow

Increases tonal contrast in black-and-white photographs.

Read more about Filters at <http://www.photosecrets.com/tips.filters.html>

4. Extra Photo Storage

If you're going on a long trip, you'll be taking lots of photos, so you'll need some way to store those pictures. Depending upon what type of camera you have, take extra "flash" memory cards or film, a photo hard disc, or laptop.

5. Camera Care

Dirty lenses or filters produce low-contrast images and washed-out colors. Keep things clean with a soft lint-free cloth, special dust-free tissues, lens-cleaning fluid, and a blower brush. A pair of tweezers is useful if sand or dirt gets lodged inside the camera. A small screwdriver can tighten up any screws that come loose, particularly on long lenses which don't like the vibrations of traveling.

6. Flash

A flash is useful for brightening people's faces on overcast days, and for indoor shots. Many cameras today include a built-in flash which is suitable for most purposes. If you're keen on interiors, consider a hand-held flash to brighten dark areas while the shutter remains open. Remember that many museums prohibit flash units as they can damage the exhibits.

7. Second Camera

If you have it, also take a compact camera, or a disposable camera. This is great for restaurants and quick snaps of unsuspecting friends in embarrassing situations. Many professionals carry a second SLR in case one jams or they're shooting with two different films. But that's a little extreme.

8. Tripods

A full-size tripod is essential for steady, top-quality shots, but is too cumbersome for most travelers. Instead carry a mono pod, or a mini-tripod - coupled with a wall or table, they're almost as good.

If you have a tripod, you'll also need a cable release to avoid camera movement when you take the shot. Alternatively use the self-timer feature.

9. Notepad and Pen

Useful for remembering good locations, bus numbers, details about your subjects, and addresses of people you meet. If you're considering submitting shots for competitions, you'll need to note your camera settings.

10. Batteries

If your camera uses rechargeable batteries, don't forget the recharger. If you're going overseas, you might need a voltage/power convertor. Take a second, spare rechargeable battery, so you can keep shooting.

It's easy to avoid buying spare batteries but there's nothing more infuriating than getting somewhere fabulous and finding out that your camera won't power up. As Gary Larsen (almost) said, just when you find the Loch Ness Monster, Bigfoot, and Elvis, all sitting together, your batteries die.

What Camera Should I Buy?

By Andrew Hudson

Also see: Books about Cameras at <http://www.photosecrets.com/books.cameras.html>

"What camera would you recommend?"

I'd recommend one that you understand. Most any camera will take a good picture -- it's controlling the camera that is the problem.

There are so many features these days that the controls can be overwhelming and put you off taking photos. So visit a camera store, play with different models, and see which ones feel right and easy to understand.

Introduction

Fundamentally, all cameras are the same and, given the same settings, a cheap camera will take the same photograph as an expensive camera. The extra money gets you improved image quality and more control over how the picture will look.

A camera is a box with a hole in it. You can make one -- called a "pinhole camera" -- using a shoe box with a window of transparent paper on one side and a small hole in the opposite side. Adding more controls, mainly to do with the lens, produces different types of cameras.

Types

Disposable Camera. These one-time use cameras are easy to carry and take surprisingly good shots. They are great for people shots at parties. You can even get "underwater" cameras, for scuba diving or at a sandy beach.

Compact "Point-and-Shoot" Camera. Perfect for snapshots. I use one for most of my personal shots and a few professional shots. I like a small, pocket-sized camera with a flash (for people's faces), a self-timer (to include myself in the shot), a wide-angle lens (28mm-equivalent for impact), and a panoramic mode (looks cool!). Most people seem to like a big, zoom lens, but I don't as I prefer "wide" shots over "tight" shots, and a bigger lens increases the size and weight of the camera.

SLR. This is the choice of semi-pro and professional travel photographers. The Single Lens Reflex feature -- which allows the viewfinder to look through the main lens instead of its own fixed lens -- allows you to remove and replace the lens. Interchangeable lenses give you more creative control of your shot. You can make a super-wide shot with a 'short' lens, or enlarge a very distant object with a 'long' lens. My favorite lens sizes are 28, 35, 50, 135, and 300mm. You can also control the aperture (the size of the hole) which allows you to decide what is, and what is not, in focus. The downside to the SLR is that you now have more equipment to buy and carry.

Medium- and Large-Format. These are big film cameras -- their size allows you to use larger film, producing a higher quality/resolution image. The equipment is large and heavy and, therefore, inconvenient for basic travel purposes.

Look for a camera with the simplest layout of the features you need and, as with the stock market, only invest in what you understand.

Here is a link that shows the authors favorite cameras in each category.

<http://www.photosecrets.com/tips.camera.html#introduction>

My Favorite Filters

By Andrew Hudson

There used to be a time when I didn't use filters. The purist in me thought it was cheating (and I hadn't bought any). But now, as I try to create pre-imagined images that are colorful and atmospheric, I seem to be using filters more and more. Here are my choices:

Polarizers

If you don't have a polarizer, stop reading this article and get one! I use a polarizer on almost every shot with a blue sky. Without a polarizer, blue skies appear a tepid, light blue on film; with a polarizer filter, they come out in a rich, deep color. The filter works by cutting out reflected glare and it's also useful for water (lakes, ponds), window glass, and tree leaves. A polarizer is more expensive than most other filters but worth the investment.

Note that most autofocus cameras require a special type called a circular polarizer which, of course, is more expensive. There are also "warming polarizers" available, which lend a warm tint, but I prefer to use a warming filter separately. And there are colored polarizers, such as the blue/yellow, which are used to add distinct colors (see below).

Filters I carry: Tiffen Circular Polarizer, Cokin 164 Circular Polarizer.

Warming Filters

Warming filters add a light brown tint to the image, to simulate the golden glow of the late afternoon sun. I use them all the time for warm, golden, magazine-style photos. There are generally three filters, named 81A, 81B and 81C. A is the lightest, B is medium, and C is the strongest. I recommend starting with 81B. Of the other two, I use the 81A more, particularly with foliage as it enhances the green of leaves and grass. Tiffen offers their 812 filter which is a warming filter good for skintones (i.e. portraits).

For the beginner, I would recommend starting with a polarizer and an 81B warming filter.

Filters I carry: Cokin 026 Warm 81A, Cokin 027 Warm 81B, Cokin 037 81C.

FL-D

This is a magenta filter that I use for most dusk shots. It's designed to color-correct fluorescent (artificial) light for daylight film. On dusk shots, street lights and office lights appear green and cold, so use a light magenta filter to make these lights white and to add a nice pink/purple color to the sky.

Filters I carry: Tiffen FL-D, Cokin 035 FL-W, Cokin 046 FL-D.

UV/Skylight/Haze

These filters are almost clear and reduce blue haze caused by UV. They're used mainly for protection - if you drop your lens, you might just damage the cheap filter instead of the expensive lens. They also protect against dust, moisture and scratches.

Filters I carry: Hoya Skylight 1B.

Neutral Density (ND)

The advanced photographer sometimes wants to reduce the overall light level in a scene, often to attain a slower shutter speed or a wider depth-of-field. Waterfalls, for example, look more romantic with slower shutter speed so I might use a two-stop neutral density (".6 ND") to "hold back" the light and get a nice long exposure. NDs are often available as .3 (1 stop), .6 (2 stop) and .9 (3 stops).

Grads

Graduated filters are useful for scenic landscapes, when you want to combine a bright sky with a shady foreground. To photograph some flowers recently, I used a 2-stop graduated neutral density filter to "hold back" (reduce the light level of) the sky to match the light level of the shady flowers. On dull, overcast days, I might use a graduated tobacco filter to add a moody brown color, or a graduated mauve or graduated blue to make the scene look sunnier.

The "reverse grad" has a band of gray in the center to reduce just the light on the horizon, but keep the top and bottom of the shot the same.

Filters I carry: Cokin 120 Gradual G1, Cokin 121 Gradual G2, Cokin 124 Graduated Tobacco, Cokin 127 Graduated Mauve M2, Cokin 151 Graduated Fog.

Sepia

I occasionally use a sepia or a light-sepia filter with old buildings. It gives the image an old, weathered, brown look.

Filters I carry: Cokin 045 Sepia.

Those are most of the filters I use regularly. Here are some others that might also appeal to you:

Low Contrast

Actually I haven't used one of these yet but it sounds interesting. Scenes with bright highlights and dark shadows (waterfalls by trees for example) are difficult to photograph as the bright areas become overexposed white and the darker areas become black. This is particularly a problem

with color slide film which has a very narrow dynamic range. A low contrast filter apparently spreads light from highlights to darker areas (but also mutes colors).

Sunset

Another filter I haven't used yet but that looks interesting. This is a warm/orange graduated filter that adds a light brown to the foreground and an orange to the sky, simulating or enhancing sunsets.

Filters I carry: Cokin 197 Sunset 1.

Blue/Yellow Polarizer

Photographers Daryl Benson and Dale Wilson rave about this filter (Cokin 173) which adds blue and/or yellow to the scene. They use it a lot, often with a graduated mauve or a light warming filter, for very colorful images.

Filters I carry: Cokin 173 Pola Blue-Yellow.

Color Enhancers (Didymium/Intensifier)

Another filter I don't use but some people do. It increases the color saturation in a shot, particularly for red, which is useful for fall shots, red barns, red flowers, and the red rocks of Arizona/Utah. Howard Ross claims to have invented this type of filter.

Photographer Daryl Benson recommends Howard Ross' filter.

Color Correcting (Compensating)

Technically color reducers, these filters hold back some colors in favor of others. For example, a CC10G reduces all colors but green by 10%. This is useful for nature shots where you want to increase the power of green in foliage. These filters often come as "gels" (thin pieces of gelatin) which I place in a Cokin holder. The CC30R is often used for underwater photography to bring up the otherwise reduced reds. CC20M is a nice dusk filter, similar to the FL-D (above). CCs are generally available in primary colors - red, green, and blue - and printing colors - cyan, magenta, and yellow.

80 Blue

The "80" range of filters offers degrees of blue for a cooling effect. I use the 80C to make snow scenes appear slightly blue, and thus colder. But, since I like my shots to look warm rather than cold, I very rarely use my 80C.

Filters I carry: Cokin 022 Blue 80C.

Diffuser/Mist/Fog/Soft

There's a variety of filters than "soften" an image by adding some foggy blur. They're sometimes used for a still lake at sunrise, a small bridge, or a woman's face. Most of my effort is spent trying to get sharp, crisp images, so I don't use a fog filter.

You might want to consider using a filter system. The most popular is by Cokin and offers a square plastic frame to attach to the end of your lens, with slots to hold up to three of their square filters. The biggest question here is...

Cokin A or P?

Cokin offers two sizes of filters. "A" is the smaller size, recommended for amateurs as small means cheap. "P" is larger and recommended for professionals who use larger lenses. I understand that the quality is no different, just the size. I use the "A" system with my 35mm SLR camera and suggest you do the same as the filters are cheaper and easier to carry. Only if you get a lens with a big piece of glass on the front (e.g. a 28-200mm lens, a 600mm or larger lens, or a lens for a medium- or large-format camera) would you need the "P" series.

Other Tips

I put small labels on each of my Cokin filters, such as "Grad ND" or "81B Warm," so that I know what they are. I keep my filters in a special Cokin box but Daryl Benson cleverly uses a CD pouch for his "P" size filters.

What Makes A Postcard-Perfect Photograph?

By Andrew Hudson

Four elements are common to all good photographs: simplicity, composition, lighting, and practice.

Simplicity is actually a deceptively difficult element to capture. What you as a photographer need to do is let the camera help you simplify the things you see in front of you. You begin with a very busy canvas (everything in view) and have to work to simplify by eliminating some of the contents. You can do this either by getting physically closer to your subject, or by using a telephoto lens to zoom in and crop the shot tighter. When you photograph a person, for example, photograph his or her face only, rather than the whole person.

Composition is equally important. An artist's technique, called the "golden mean," is to divide the picture into imaginary thirds both vertically and horizontally, like a tic-tac-toe board. Then, place the subject of the photo on or near those imaginary lines or their intersections. Study photographs that you like and you'll see that almost every one has thirds that you can find.

Lighting is the third key ingredient. Photos that win competitions almost always show a skilled use of light. Try to photograph only at dawn, in the late afternoon, and at dusk, when the low angle of the sun produces rich, warm colors and long shadows. Avoid shooting at noon, a time when light is very "flat."

Practice: Taking photographs that you like won't take a lot of special, expensive equipment. But it will take lots of trial and error. Even professional photographers take many photographs of the same subject to get just one that they like. Remember, only practice makes perfect!

How to Take Better Photographs Of People

By Andrew Hudson

Of all the various subjects, people reliably make the best photographs. Nothing is more fascinating to us than other people. A good 'people' photograph shows character, emotion and a connection for the viewer. Here are some tips to help you take great shots of the people in your life.

Subject Placement. The biggest mistake many photographers make is to try to shoot a person's whole body, head to toe. Don't attempt this, unless clothes are important (such as a uniform). Instead, focus on the face. The eyes and mouth are the most important features, so start there and work out until you have just enough to represent the individual(s). Crop tightly, and don't be afraid to overflow the frame with the person's face.

Lighting. A standard lighting technique is to position yourself so the sun is behind you and to one side. This arrangement will shine light on the subject's face, while the slight angle will produce shadows to illuminate form. A better approach is to put your subject in a shady area with a shadowed background. Unlike the human eye, photographic film can't easily handle bright areas and dark shadows, as in direct sunlight, so use the shade for a narrow tonal range. Overcast days are usually best for portraits. Use the flash ('fill-flash' or 'daylight flash') to add light to the face and fill in shadows.

Lenses. Use a long lens such as 135mm - the 'people' lens. A wide-angle distorts the face, although it can be effective for parties. Find a simple, mid-toned background and use a wide aperture to throw it out of focus. I like to use tree leaves or a wall as a background and a 200mm lens set to f2.8. Center the eyes in the shot, not the head, to provide balance in the shot. When photographing children, crouch down so that you're shooting at their eye-level.

Setting The Scene. Try to set-up your camera ahead of time rather than making people wait. Help relax your subjects by engaging them in conversation. Get them to laugh or smile with a joke from the day. Finally, be sure to put yourself in the shot -- that's what the self-timer is for!

How Do I Compose A Photograph?

By Andrew Hudson

Composition is the key to an interesting photograph. Despite all the technical jargon, photography is essentially an art form, and its most important aspect is composition. To improve your art skills, find photos you like and study them, asking yourself: 'Why exactly do I like this picture?'

Subject. When you take a photograph, identify what the subject is. Answering 'a person' or 'a building' is not good enough. You need to go deeper and specify 'the curves of the body' or 'the crumbling stonework' -- something that activates your senses, that you can touch, feel, smell, or taste. This process is the most overlooked step in photography. Although it may be tempting to simply snap your photos and rush on, I urge you to take time to visually explore the subject and see what appeals to you. Ask yourself: 'What is the purpose of this photograph?' and 'What is the reaction I want a viewer to have?'

Context. Next find a 'context' -- a simple backdrop which adds relevance, contrast, and/or location to the 'subject.' You can add depth by finding a 'context' in a different spatial plane than the 'subject.' For example, if the subject is a building in the background, make the context a flower or person in the foreground.

Now combine the two in a simple way. I like to say that a good photograph is a subject, a context, and nothing else. Remove any clutter that detracts from your message. Get closer -- zoom in -- and crop as tightly as possible.

Subject Placement. The placement of your subject in the frame denotes its relevance to the context. The center of the frame is the weakest place -- it's static, dull, and gives no value to the context. The more you move the subject away from the center, the more relevance you give to the context; so juggle until you get the right balance. Each item has a 'weight' and, like a waiter filling up a tray, you need to balance the weights within the frame.

Lines and Paths. Create impact by using real or inferred lines that lead the viewer's eye into and around the picture. Railway tracks, rivers, and fences are obvious choices, but there are also inferred lines from the subject to the context. Lines have subtle effects. Horizontal lines are peaceful; diagonals are dynamic or tense; and curves are active and sensuous. You can also connect lines in a path or shape, such as a triangle.

A picture is a playground for the eyes to explore, so provide a path of movement, and some space for the eye to rest.

Photographing Memories of a Trip

By Andrew Hudson

Tell a Story

Always think how your prints will look when you show them to your friends and relatives. You'll be narrating a story at the time so take shots to illustrate your story. Take photos of your traveling companions before you leave home, while traveling to the airport, and when you get back. Hopefully you'll see a change in your sun tan! Photograph yourselves in front of "Welcome to..." signs to use as "chapter headings."

Take a Small Camera

Despite having a lot of large 'professional' equipment, the camera I use most often with friends is a small, "compact" camera. I have a really tiny model that I can slip easily into a pocket and carry around with me. That way, whenever something unexpected and fun happens, I'm ready to capture the moment.

Photographing People

The most useful tip for photographing people is to get closer. Try and fill the frame with just the faces. Ask your subjects to stand or sit closer together, so there's less "wasted" space in the photo. Turn the flash on, even when you're outdoors, to highlight the faces.

Understand Your Flash

I often see people trying to photograph a live show or concert. Unfortunately this is almost impossible to do with a normal camera. Most on-camera flash units are only effective for about eight to ten feet - anything further away will just appear black on the photo. Whenever you use a flash indoors, make sure that you're between two and eight feet from your subject.

Don't Forget the Fun!

Many of the fun times occur between sights. Capture these with "ordinary" shots - checking in, waiting in line, at the shops, having dinner with friends, with people you meet.

Don't Forget You!

The problem with being the photographer is that you don't appear in the photos. Stand your camera on a wall or table and use the self-timer feature, or ask someone else to take the photo. Chances are they'll have a camera too and will ask you to return the favor!

Special Effects with a Point-and-Shoot Camera

By Andrew Hudson

Question: What are some tricks and special effects I can try with my basic camera?

Answer: Even if you have the cheapest, most basic camera, you can still do many of the special-effects that professionals do with more expensive cameras.

Filters

You can use any filter (colored or distorted glass or plastic that camera shops sell for about \$10-\$20) but make sure it covers the lens and, if you have one, the exposure window (a small window near the lens) so that your pictures get exposed correctly. Red, orange and blue filters can make striking images while a soft-focus or fog filter adds a romantic touch to faces and water. You can even make you own filter with a colored plastic bag or glass.

Colored Flash

You can also use colored filters over the flash instead of the lens (professionals call these "gels"). For a Halloween party, try using a red filter over the flash to make people look even more scary!

Old World

One of my favorites effects uses a sepia filter. The light-brown color makes your pictures look old and classic.

Mirrors

Magicians use mirrors and you can too. Take a photo of yourself by pointing into a window. Or include both halves of a room by using a mirror in half of the shot.

Shoot Underwater

If you're on vacation at the beach, take an underwater shot while swimming. Place your camera in a clear plastic bag, remove most of the air, and seal well. Now you can photograph underwater! (Be careful, any water entering the bag will damage the camera).

How to Photograph Fireworks

By Andrew Hudson

Photographs of fireworks are spectacular, colorful, and fairly easy to do once you know the tricks. For best results, you will need: an SLR camera, tripod, cable release, a long lens, and plenty of patience.

Since you don't know exactly when the fireworks will explode, and you are aiming to capture their trails, you will need to hold the camera shutter open for 2-30 seconds. Compact cameras don't usually offer this long exposure feature so you will probably need an SLR camera with a manual exposure mode often called 'Bulb' (often marked 'B').

To get sharp images, you must keep the camera perfectly still. Propping your camera on a wall, car-top or table may suffice, but nothing beats a good, solid tripod. You'll also need a cable release to activate the shutter without touching and moving the camera.

Waterfront settings are good as you can include the reflections of the fireworks in your shot. Cityscapes, landmarks, or people add context to the shot, but remember that they'll come out as silhouettes, so don't include faces or other details. High viewpoints, upwind from the smoke, are usually best. Get there early to secure your spot and select a lens (usually a telephoto) that will fill the frame with trails. Use the first burst to focus the lens (don't rely on your 'infinity' setting).

To photograph the fireworks, open the shutter, wait for some bursts, then close the shutter. That's it! Take lots of photos (which you can edit later) to get a few good shots. Try different apertures (f8 is the safest) and different zoom settings. Include only a few bursts to fill up the frame; too many will look messy. To reduce the effect of street lighting, cover the lens between bursts with your hand, a black card, or a black cap.

Looking for a truly spectacular shot? You can double-expose your film to include the full moon with the fireworks. (Only a few cameras provide a "multiple-exposure" mode).

Postcard Photography

Photo Tips from America's Most Prolific Postcard Photographer

By James Blank

Thanks for reading this article. I've been a postcard photographer since 1969 and I love it. There's no better way to enjoy the classic views of our great cities.

Postcard photography is the pursuit of the perfect scenic picture. Anyone can do it. I manage to make a living from this but it's really just about being in the right place at the right time.

I'm happy to share my experiences with fellow enthusiasts of travel photography. Please enjoy and have fun with your camera.

How To Get Clear Pictures

I have been asked many times over the years how I get such deep blue skies and clarity in my pictures. The answer is simple: I only shoot on exceptionally clear days with great visibility.

For the clearest air, shoot in winter. The views are crisp and sharp and distant mountains are distinct. From February to May, I'm madly visiting all my favorite places, building a year's worth of stock which I'll sell during the rest of the year.

As soon as I arrive at a location, I always check the weather forecast for the next few days. I only shoot in good weather. Many times I have stayed in a hotel room for several days before the weather was right.

I spend part of my time on "bad weather" days looking at postcard racks, skimming picture books, and exploring the area. When the weather breaks, I'm ready to get working.

Amateur vs. Professional

The one big difference I've observed between an amateur photographer and a professional is this: when both stop and look at a beautiful scene, the amateur will take one picture and move on while the pro will take many pictures of the same scene at varying times and exposures before moving on.

Of course, the professional has more time available. But the pro knows he or she must get the perfect exposure because their job is riding on it. It's really simple: if a pro doesn't bring back good, usable photography, they won't be asked to shoot again.

Research is key to getting the best shot. Look for a high viewpoint that combines several landmarks in a tight grouping. Plan on spending ample time at your viewpoint, to get the best exposure, light, and composition.

Images That Sell

I usually shoot every good scene in both horizontal and vertical formats. When I first started out, I shot mostly horizontals, and I lost out on a lot of vertical sales. The initial cost of the extra shot is more than offset by the increased sales.

Calendar company buyers appreciate photographers who have images representing all four seasons. In putting together their calendars each year, they like to deal with as few photographers as possible.

All the stock agencies that I deal with only want digital images submitted. I shoot now with a Nikon D200 camera, and my library of over 200,000 transparencies awaits to be scanned. Most clients now want to see only digital images. I still sell a lot of film to my clients even though it's been less and less over the past five years. So there is still some film buyers out there and probably will be for the near future. I used to shoot with medium-format as, it turned out, size does matter! I still shoot film with my Nikon F5 and Hasselblad X-Pan.

Equipment

I've been asked many times by beginning pros if it's necessary to buy expensive (i.e. 'fast') lenses. In the case of landscape photography, I don't think so. Most of your pictures will be taken on a tripod, so a fast lens is not needed. Most of my landscapes are taken at F16, F22, or F32. The only exception is aerial photography where one or two fast lenses can come in handy. One of the most important items in a photographer's equipment is a tripod. The larger and heavier the camera, the more a tripod is needed. To get great depth-of-field, which is important for landscape photography, a tripod is a "must."

As far as filters go, I use only one -- a polarizer. This is really a great filter and, when used properly, increases the color saturation of all the hues in a scene (not just the blue in the sky, as some people think). I have polarizers for all my lenses and take them off only when they aren't needed.

Favorite Cities

San Diego is my favorite city to photograph. I find the beauty of the landscape to be mind-boggling, offering so many beautiful and varied places to photograph.

My other favorite cities to photograph are San Francisco, Boston, New Orleans, New York, Chicago, Montreal, and Vancouver. Along with San Diego, each of these areas has an ambiance that makes it unique. I have shot these cities over and over again and still look forward to going back and doing it another time.

I hope this article will help my fellow photographers get some great pictures. Good shooting!



My Signature Shot

This is the classic postcard view of San Diego. For over thirty years, I have sold this shot more than any other.

The viewpoint is from Point Loma, a 400-foot-high peninsula overlooking San Diego Bay. Notice the fabulous grouping of multiple landmarks. In the foreground are palm trees and sailboats, in the center are the calming bay waters and high-rise buildings, and in the far background are hulking mountains.

The color comes from shooting at dusk.

Photo © 2006 James Blank.



Aerial View

Here's another view of San Diego, this time with the sweeping Coronado Bay Bridge in the foreground.

Postcard photos are usually from a high viewpoint. When there's no mountain or observation tower to help, I use a helicopter. It's a big expense but the only way to get certain shots.

Photo © 2006 James Blank.



My Signature Shot

This is the classic postcard view of San Diego. For over thirty years, I have sold this shot more than any other.

The viewpoint is from Point Loma, a 400-foot-high peninsula overlooking San Diego Bay. Notice the fabulous grouping of multiple landmarks. In the foreground are palm trees and sailboats, in the center are the calming bay waters and high-rise buildings, and in the far background are hulking mountains.

The color comes from shooting at dusk.

Photo © 2006 James Blank.



Aerial View

Here's another view of San Diego, this time with the sweeping Coronado Bay Bridge in the foreground.

Postcard photos are usually from a high viewpoint. When there's no mountain or observation tower to help, I use a helicopter. It's a big expense but the only way to get certain shots.

Photo © 2006 James Blank.

Aerial Photography

By James Blank

Aerial photography might be a valuable addition to any landscape photographer's repertoire. It adds a whole new perspective for the photographer. For samples, see my Web site with John Bahu (<http://www.photosecrets.com/tips.aerial.qa.html>), San Diego Scenics (<http://www.sandiegoscenics.com/>).

Here's what I've learned during 23 years in the business.

I took up aerial photography in 1983 quite by accident while I was working for a large postcard printer in New York. I was sent on an assignment to a client in Virginia Beach. Among the many views the client wanted me to shoot was an aerial of the Chesapeake Bay Bridge and Tunnel. The company hired a helicopter for me to use. Needless to say I was a little nervous, never having done aerial work before and knowing nothing about it. The nervesness lasted only until I started to shoot the bridge and then I forgot about the door being off and nothing holding me in the aircraft but a seat belt. I had enough sense to know that I needed a fast shutter speed to keep my images sharp and I lucked out on my first aerial assignment. As soon as I got home I went to the library to find out all I could about aerial photography.

After a couple of flights I came to love shooting aerals. Aerals have become a major part of my photography income.

The freedom of getting any angle you desire for good pictures can't be beat. On the ground you are limited by your environment.

From 1983 to the present, I've been taking aerals for clients in twenty-five states and a province of Canada.

I shoot from two types of aircraft, helicopters and Cessnas. Cessnas have the high wing so you can shoot out the open window, under the wing.

Given the choice, "choppers" are much more suited for aerals because of their greater maneuverability. They are also allowed to fly at a lower altitude, which helps get better pictures. With a Cessna you fly higher and faster and need more lenses for your cameras due to the higher altitude.

Another advantage of the helicopter is that many of them can "hover" in one spot so you can "bracket" your shots without taking all the time it takes for a Cessna to turn around and come back.

Price wise there's a big difference. The rental on a Cessna is between \$75.00 and \$125.00 per hour while helicopters rent from \$250.00 to \$1000.00 and hour, depending on the size of the helicopter.

In some areas of the country I was unable to find helicopters to rent while I never ran into a place where I couldn't rent a Cessna. Also some clients won't pay the high price of a "chopper".

The pilot that comes with the rental aircraft also makes a difference. Some are not familiar with aerial photography and how photographers shoot. Others are used to taking up photographers and actually help get good shots for the photographer.

The basic equipment that an aerial photographer needs is the following: A camera with a zoom lens, say about 28mm to 300mm would be ideal for almost any situation. Bring plenty of film because if you run out you can't go back to the car for more.

The equipment I take on an aerial assignment are a Nikon F5, a Nikon D-200 digital camera (with several cards), a Pentax 67 medium format camera with five lenses (28mm, 75mm, 105mm, 200mm, and 300mm) and a Hasselblad panoramic camera with two lenses.

The one thing that is paramount is shutter speed. I shoot with my shutter speed at 500 sec., changing it to 1,000 sec. when the big teles are used such as the 200mm and 300mm for my Pentax 67.

The film I usually use is either Fuji Velvia 100 or Ektachrome E100 VS.

One of the most important things when shooting aerials is to keep the horizon level. When you are working fast as you do shooting aerials, you can easily forget about the horizon. Also using wide angles you have to make sure the helicopter rotor is not in your view finder or the wing of the Cessna.

An amusing incident I experienced in a helicopter flight around New York City occurred in 1992. We were circling around the Statue of Liberty about 500 feet when the helicopter started climbing at a very fast rate. I asked the pilot why we were going up so far and he replied that he was just given an order to take the "chopper" up to 10,000 feet to avoid getting near President Bush's helicopter which was landing nearby. So while we were up there I took pictures of the whole island of Manhattan with part of Brooklyn, Queens, and Jersey City in the frame. I never would have gotten those great pictures, which I have sold over and over again, if it hadn't been for that order.

Another scary incident was in a Cessna shooting the Florida coastline south of Daytona Beach. We were flying about 1,000 feet when my pilot got an order that we had invaded the Cape Canaveral air space and to get out immediately. My pilot kept trying to get out of it but he was continually ordered to get out immediately. My pilot was even a little alarmed and confused but we finally got out of their air space and he told me that we could have been shot down if we had ignored the warnings. I was sure glad to get back on the ground that day.

Aerial Photography: Questions and Answers

By John Bahu

Here are some questions and answers that may help you get started in aerial photography.

When is the best time to do aerial photography?

On the days with the clearest weather conditions and unlimited visibility.

What type of camera do you need?

Any SLR camera, either film or digital, will work out fine.

What type of lenses should you use?

A zoom lens is the most ideal, but may not give you the best image quality. A fixed lens with a focal length of 28mm, 35mm, or 50mm will give you the most shooting options if it is your intent to do landscape aerial photography at altitudes 500 feet or below. If you plan on shooting at altitudes above 500 feet then you may need a lens with a focal length of at least 105mm to as much as 300mm.

What is the best aerial platform to shoot from?

A helicopter is probably your best choice and you have many options; a small two seater, like an R-22 is the most economical, but not the most stable and a Jetranger is more stable, but more expensive. They range in price from \$250/hr. to over \$1,000/hr. A small fixed wing plane is the most economical, like a Cessna, but you are limited to higher altitudes and can only orbit in circles. They start at about \$50/hr. for a two-seater.

What type of film should you use?

A slow speed film, ISO 50 or ISO 100 is best for daytime aerial photography. Fuji Velvia and Kodak VS are probably the best brands.

What are the best camera settings?

A fast shutter speed of at least 1/500 sec. and a large aperture.

What are some shooting techniques and tips?

1. Bracket your shots.
2. Keep the horizon level.
3. Use Autofocus if shooting below 500 feet and use manual focus (on infinity setting) if shooting above 500 feet.

Ten Tips for Travel Photographers

By Bob Krist

INTRODUCTION

There's a school of thought that says the secret of successful location photography is simply a matter of "f/8 and be there." While that may be the case in a fast-breaking news situation or some other once-in-a-lifetime event, the fact is that shooting on vacation takes the same meticulous preparation that goes into planning one. When you're out of the safe confines of the house or the backyard, there's a myriad of things that can stand between you and a successful shoot. I spend 6-8 months a year on the road, mostly overseas, and here are a few things I've learned about the fine art of location shooting.

1. BE PREPARED

The Boy Scouts definitely have the right idea. When a camera or a vital piece of equipment goes down in the middle of a trip, it can be an inconvenience or a downright tragedy -- depending on whether or not you have a spare. The best spare is a second body, identical to your mainstay machine, but even if it's just a point and shoot zoom camera, it's better than nothing!

The further you are from home, the more important spares become. For instance, I do 90% of my work with three zoom lenses, a 20-35mm, a 28-70mm, and an 80-200mm, all f/2.8's. Zooms are a great convenience on the road, but if you drop or break one, you lose an entire range of coverage. I bring two lighter, slower, and cheaper zooms -- a 24-50mm and a 70-210mm -- as backups. If that's a little excessive, and a point and shoot zoom isn't enough, consider one of the compact 28-200mm zooms as a one-lens backup system.

How important are backups? I'm writing this article on the plane home from an assignment in Belize, where I dropped a camera in 3 feet of salt water on the first day of the shoot. Fortunately, I had two more bodies and a spare lens to complete the job.

2. KNOW BEFORE YOU GO

The magic word is research. Whether it's a major travel assignment or a family vacation, the more specifics you know about the location, the better your pictures will be. Here's what I do to research a destination I'm assigned to photograph.

I head to the library, where I look up any National Geographic stories that have been done on the area. These stories always give you a good visual sense of what the place looks like. Many libraries also have sections containing brochures and travel guides, and I make liberal use of these, ever alert to phrases like "stunning views", "picturesque", and "photographers' delight", which pop up frequently.

You can't know too much about the location you're visiting. It's no accident, for instance, that many of the stories I shoot for Travel/Holiday, National Geographic Traveler, and Islands

magazines contain lively people pictures. Whenever I land an assignment, I call the US-based tourist office of the country or the state tourist office if it's a domestic shoot, and I ask for any literature on the area, including a schedule of events. If there's a big festival or parade happening, I may schedule my whole trip around it. But even small events, like a music festival or folk dance demonstration, can be great photo ops.

There are countless small details, which, if overlooked, can ruin a shoot. For instance, if you plan to use a tripod around some of the monuments and buildings in Washington D.C., you'd better have the proper permits from the Capitol Police, or prepare to be hassled. Popping down to the Caribbean with rechargeable batteries as part of your kit? Even though these islands are in the U.S.'s backyard, voltage and plug types vary from island to island and adaptors are all but impossible to find once there.

The more you travel, the more you'll be able to anticipate the types of questions that need to be answered before you set foot out of the house.

3. SEIZE THE (WHOLE) DAY

It's no secret that the most beautiful light occurs early in the morning and late in the afternoon. In fact, John Loengard, the former picture editor of LIFE, once quipped that "Teachers don't work in the summer, and photographers don't shoot in the middle of the day." In a perfect world, that may be true, but most of us need to utilize the whole day while we're on location.

To make the most of my time, I'll shoot my scenics and exteriors in the early morning and late afternoon. I save interiors and closeup shots, location scouting and phone call returning for the middle of the day, when the light is more harsh. If I need to shoot people in the middle of the day, I look for backlight or open shade, using fill flash or a reflector to open shadows and add sparkle.

You can "stretch" the nice warm light of early morning or late afternoon, adding another hour of good light, by using a warming filter, an 81C or 81 EF. These filters mimic the warmth of the early morning/late afternoon sun and as long as the sun is somewhat low in the sky (two to three hours before sunset or after sunrise), the effect is very natural looking. Do this at noon, however, and it will look phony and contrived.

Finally, don't quit shooting when the sun goes down. Sure, everyone loves to shoot the sunset itself, but how many stick around for the afterglow and the dusk? This half hour or so after sunset, when there is still color in the sky, is such a favorite time to shoot that it is known as the "magic hour" by many photographers. It's the ideal time to shoot skylines, lighted monuments, and even landscapes.

4. STANDARDIZE AND KEEP IT SIMPLE

A trip on location is not an excuse to load everything you own into bags and take it with you. True, I take backups for my most-used lenses and cameras, but they stay locked up in the hotel

room and hopefully, I won't need to use them. As a rule, if I can't comfortably carry it around all day in my bag, it stays at home or back in the hotel. Travel photography is a very fluid thing and you must be able to react quickly. And you can't react quickly if you're loaded down with gear. Unfortunately, today you can't safely leave anything in the trunk of a rental car anywhere, so that's no longer an option.

I was recently on a press trip in the Caribbean with a photographer who had everything. Whenever we spotted a picture and stopped the van, my colleague took about 10 minutes to load himself up with a huge 300mm lens, a big tripod, a fisheye lens, an extra fannypack, etc. Spontaneous grab shots and found moments were, of course, out of the question. And by the time he emerged, festooned with all the gear, the picture was gone (and I was finished shooting it), and he became the center of attention instead of capturing it on film.

To further lighten my load, I standardize whenever possible. Batteries, for instance, are a necessary evil for a traveling photographer, and their weight and bulk can easily add up to a major burden. Everything I carry -- cameras, flash units, battery packs, meters, travel alarm, flashlight, shortwave radio, etc. -- runs on AA batteries. I don't need to carry four different types of batteries, just a whole slew of reasonable, easily replaced AAs. Once, on a domestic flight in India, all my batteries, including those already in cameras and flashes, were confiscated from my carryon bags before I boarded. They were supposed to be returned to me upon arrival, but somehow during the flight, the batteries disappeared. I was left literally powerless in the middle of rural southern India. Even in this fairly remote location though, AAs were easy to find, and I was up and running again in no time.

5. BEAT THE INTERIOR SHOOTIN' BLUES

Castles, palaces, historic mansions, atmospheric museums -- one of these will probably figure into a vacation itinerary no matter where you go. Unfortunately, however, there are usually prohibitions against using flash, and sometimes even tripods. But there are ways to work around this.

Forget about lenses with maximum apertures smaller than $f/2.8$. This is the time to break out that fast normal lens, a 50mm $f/1.8$ for example. I prefer a wider lens, and usually end up shooting in the 20-24mm range, which gives me a little extra apparent depth of field along with its wider coverage.

In most cases, you'll still be hovering below the hand holdable shutter speed limit (1/30th to 1/15th of a second for most people). To stretch that limit, I put my camera on a Leitz table-top tripod and brace it against my chest. This lowers my hand holdable range by about two shutter speeds -- I routinely get away with 1/4 of a second exposures with the 20mm or 24mm setting on my wideangle zoom. In addition to bracing a table-top tripod against your chest, you can also rest it on railings, or brace it against a wall or a doorjamb. After a while you become very adept at finding places to brace a table-top, and you'd be surprised at what you can get away with.

I once had an assignment to photograph three of King Ludwig's castles in Bavaria. The magazine arranged special permission with the castle administrators for me to shoot interiors with tripod and lights. But somehow, when I reached the third castle, beautiful Herrenchiemsee, they could not find the paperwork. Since it was a weekend, nothing could be done to reach the office, and I was scheduled to return stateside on that Monday.

Rather than return home without pictures, I simply took tour after tour of the castle interior along with the other tourists. On each trip through, I would shoot as much as I could with my table-top tripod, looking for new spots to brace the tripod on my next tour through. Not the most efficient way to shoot an assignment, but I had enough publishable interiors to save the assignment, thanks to the table-top tripod.

6. FOUL WEATHER TACTICS

Don't pack away the camera when the sun's not out and the sky's not blue -- there are plenty of good pictures that can be taken when the weather's less than ideal. The key to shooting in these conditions is to eliminate the sky from any of your pictures because it will register a bald white or gray. Instead, look for compositions that don't include the horizon. The more graphic and colorful the subject matter, the better.

There are some subjects that are actually better shot under the low contrast overcast light. Flower close-ups, street scenes, people pictures are all ideal subjects for this kind of light. Even when the rain or snow starts to fall, I look for compositions that utilize reflections on wet streets, pattern shots with umbrellas, , and slice of life pictures of people taking shelter from or otherwise coping with the weather.

7. SHOOT PEOPLE PICTURES

One of the most common shortcomings in amateur travel photography is the lack of people pictures. Frame after frame of architecture and landscapes may be fine if architects and landscapers make up your audience, but most people want to see pictures of other people.

Shyness is the main excuse for not photographing people in your travels. Here are a few ways to overcome that shyness and break the ice.

Look for subjects with whom you naturally interact during your travels. People in the hospitality industry -- waiters, doormen, bellhops, taxi drivers, even the friendly cop who gives you directions -- are usually easy to approach and more than happy to pose for a quick picture. If you're out on the street or an outdoor market, vendors are usually amenable to a picture, especially if you buy some of their wares (it doesn't have to be expensive -- a hot dog, a few pieces of fruit, a small souvenir).

Street entertainers and artists also make great photo subjects, as their acts and art work are colorful and lively. Since these folks make their living in tips, it's appropriate to offer one if you are going to take a few pictures.

Despite what the "rules" say, you don't have to use a medium telephoto to shoot all of your people pictures. Sure, that focal length is great for headshots. But you'll want to do some environmental portraits, showing both the subject and his surroundings, with a wide angle lens too. Remember to keep chatting with your subject as you are shooting to keep his or her interest. If you fall into dead silence, or if you spend an undue amount of time fiddling with your cameras, your subject will glaze over, and the resulting pictures will suffer.

8. SEEK THE HIGH GROUND

It's all too easy to fall into a shoulder-high eye-level perspective when shooting on the road. This is fine for a majority of your pictures, but just as you want to vary your lens choice to keep your pictures interesting, you should also vary your point of view.

High angle views are perfect for travel photography. Nothing gives a better sense of place than a sweeping panorama shot from a highway viewpoint, hotel window, or an observation platform in a tower or skyscraper. High viewpoints abound in most travel situations, and they're easy to find once you've trained yourself to seek them out.

I start on arrival, always asking for a room with a view when I check into a hotel. Afterward, I am constantly on the lookout for rooftop terrace restaurants, scenic overlooks, observation decks, sky rides, elevated walkways, boardwalks, and overpasses, and if all else fails, an open window in an upper level store or restaurant.

Scenes that often look chaotic at ground level, like an outdoor market or a stand of forest, take on pattern and order when seen from above. So once you've found your perch, be sure to explore it with different focal lengths, looking for patterns and tighter shots with a telephoto as well as those sweeping vistas shot with normal and wideangle lenses.

You don't necessarily need to be outdoors to look for an elevated viewpoint. Museums, cathedrals, malls, and historic buildings often have balconies and galleries which can produce some interesting perspectives.

9. HOW LOW CAN YOU GO?

Low angle compositions, although not as obvious as elevated ones, have a drama all their own.

You can create exciting compositions by breaking a few rules of architectural photography and shoot upwards at buildings and monuments. The perspective of converging vertical lines adds a sense of drama, and the sky is often a better background than the surrounding clutter of buildings, telephone lines, and automobiles you encounter with eye level views.

Low angle views emphasize parts of a composition that are often overlooked in shoulder-high photography. Shells on a beach, cobblestones in the street, or the feet of dancers in a folklore show each take on a heightened importance when shot from ground level. Because of their

tendency to emphasize objects in the foreground, wide angle lenses are perfect for exploring the world down under. If you find yourself becoming fond of this perspective, you can buy an accessory angle finder which screws into the eyepiece of your SLR camera. This item allows you to see the viewfinder from a 90-degree angle, and saves wear and tear on your knees and clothing because you don't have to go quite so low to compose your picture.

Pictures of people, especially children, can benefit from being photographed from a lower angle. Kids respond well when you get down to their level, often rewarding you with much warmer and more spontaneous expressions than when you loom over them. They take on much more importance in the frame when they are photographed from their height rather than yours. Full-sized folks look good when they are isolated from a low angle against a nice plain background like the sky rather eye-level clutter.

10. LOOK FOR ELEMENTS OF SCALE

How many times have you come back from a trip where majestic mountains end up looking like so many mole hills in your pictures, and broad sweeping landscapes you remember as breathtaking just look like big empty spaces? More than likely, the culprit is the absence of scale. To appreciate the size of a natural landscape feature in a photograph, the eye must see a subject of known size -- a human figure, for instance--to judge it against. Without that sense of scale within the frame, a waterfall could be 12 feet high, or 120 feet high -- there's no way to judge.

Almost all the publications I work for prefer some sense of scale in their landscape pictures. Scale can take the form of a person, a vehicle, a boat, an animal -- anything that is of known size. Using a long lens helps to compress the perspective and gives a dramatic, looming presence to whatever it is you're photographing.

This is a good time to utilize your family members as "scale models" by having them walk, hike, or drive through the scene you're photographing. Since your models will more than likely be too far away to talk to, make sure you let them look through the lens and discuss where they should stand before they set off. This will save you and your vocal cords a lot of aggravation.

JUST DO IT

Keeping all the above pointers in mind seems like a lot to remember when you're out shooting on vacation. But it's not that hard and it's worth the effort. You'll be surprised at how the intelligent application of a few of the preceding suggestions will vastly improve your results. You'll find that the pictures of your vacation will finally live up to your fond memories.

Five Pro Tips for Travel Photography

Photographing with New Eyes

By Andrew Hudson

Marcel Proust, the French novelist, wrote in his autobiography: "The real voyage of discovery consists not in seeking new landscapes but in having new eyes." Proust applied his maxim to life, but I think it applies equally well to travel photography. Recently I've been teaching myself to photograph with "new eyes." This article describes some tips that I've come across that you can use in your photographic "voyage of discovery."

A few years ago, I turned "pro" by resigning my job and working full-time on a new series of travel guides for photographers called *PhotoSecrets* (<http://www.photosecrets.com/>). The task appeared straight-forward - I would simply need to shoot photos of all the classic views in a geographic area. I soon found, however, that my amateur snaps weren't sufficient for the requirements of a publishing venture. A book demands a different type of photograph than a personal photo album, and I needed to make my photographs more powerful, colorful, evocative and inspiring. Upon inspection, I discovered a whole dimension of skills I needed to learn to become 'professional' - making images suitable for publication instead of merely snapping to record memories. Like Proust, I didn't just need new landscapes; I needed new eyes.

The first step was to better understand my objective. I started looking at travel books and magazines to discover which photographs I admired. As the adage goes, start with the end in mind. I analyzed the best photographs to determine what made them work, and why they were more effective than my pictures. This was a time-consuming task but I highly recommend it as a tool to improve your photography. The pictures I admired displayed bold colors, a simple composition, a good use of light, a three-dimensional depth, and an unusual and interesting view of a familiar sight.

After learning what I wanted to achieve, I read photography books and magazines, such as *Shutterbug's Outdoor and Nature Photography*, to learn the skills I needed. The final step was to put the skills into practice, by setting up exercises and shooting many rolls of film. As with most skills, practice makes perfect, and practice is the fun part! This is a continuous-feedback cycle, and I continue to compare my photos to images I admire.

Here are five tips to help you improve your travel photography.

1. Aim for Impact

A great photograph catches the eye. It leaps off the page and demands attention. While a picture may say a thousand words, I think a great photo should say just one - "Wow!"

There are four keys to visual impact: simplicity, color, light, and depth.

- **Simplicity.** When I look at many photographs, the element that is most often missing is simplicity -- they're just too cluttered. To deliver a clear message you must have a concise statement. In your photographs, crop out unnecessary items and resolve the view down to

the most fundamental elements. Include only enough of the surroundings to give your subject some context. Banish distracting clutter, particularly from the edges of the picture. You can simplify a shot by getting closer to your subject and using a wide-angle lens, or zooming in more with a long lens.

When photographing a California mission, for example, I like to use a strong foreground and a 28mm lens. I place the white mission in the top third of the frame and fill the lower two-thirds with colorful flowers or a fountain. I love to overflow the bottom of the frame for that endless feel. Using a small aperture, such as f22, keeps everything in focus.

On the cover of my San Francisco book (<http://www.photosecrets.com/ssf.html>) is a shot of the Golden Gate Bridge from the Marin Headlands. Other photographers choose to include the whole bay and scenery, but I used a 300mm lens, plus a 2x converter, to zoom in tight on just the north tower. Using a representative detail of the bridge, rather than the entire span, makes the image simpler and thus more powerful.

- **Color.** My favorite way to create impact is to look for bold hues. I love shots with sports-car reds, soothing blues, vibrant yellows and luscious greens. Again, simplicity is key - try to minimize the number and types of colors in your shot for more impact. Generally a photograph should have one main subject and one main color. Concentrate on just one of the three primary colors: red, blue, or yellow. These dominating colors are best balanced with their respective complementary colors: red with green, blue with orange, and yellow with purple.

For years I couldn't record dramatic colors in my photographs; it was very frustrating. I tried filters and exposure bracketing, but nothing worked. And then I found the secret, which can be summed up in a word: Velvia. Changing to Fujichrome Velvia (ISO 50) slide film suddenly turned my tame amateur snaps into bold professional images. It was like a revelation. Kodak's Ektachrome E100S and Elite II 100 are highly saturated films too, though not quite as "punchy."

There are two other tricks for bold colors, both very simple. The first is to use a polarizer filter, a very inexpensive accessory. On almost every daytime outdoor photograph I use a polarizer to deepen the blue sky. It also wipes glare from surfaces, allowing rich colors to shine through. The second is to constrain your image to medium tones. Unlike the human eye, photographic film has a small dynamic range that can only capture a narrow range of brightness levels. So, exclude elements that are much brighter or darker than your subject is, and keep an even tone throughout the frame. Ansel Adams codified this theory in his famous "Zone System."

- **Light.** A good use of light is often the key to award-winning photos. Using daylight effectively can also improve your colors. The key to that rich "National Geographic" look is to photograph when the light is golden - the hours immediately after sunrise and before sunset, often called the "magic hours" by photographers. As the sun approaches the horizon, its light has to pass through a greater air mass, including ozone, dust and water

vapor. Wavelengths at the blue end of the spectrum are scattered and absorbed more than those at the red end of the spectrum, so the sunlight appears to turn yellow, then red. This golden light paints your scene in the warmth of a log fire, creating stunning images. The dimmer light also contracts the brightness range of the scene, allowing camera film to better capture the colors.

- **Depth.** Include some pointers to depth, to give your two-dimensional photographs a three-dimensional feel. For example, place the subject and context in different spatial planes by combining a distant background with a close foreground. Look for "leading lines," such as a wall, fence or pathway to pull the viewer into the shot. Again, photograph in the "magic hours" as longer shadows enhance shape and texture, and help separate the subject from the background.

2. Conduct Research

The more you research a destination, the better your photos will likely be. This is the basis of my first book, *PhotoSecrets San Francisco and Northern California* (<http://www.photosecrets.com/ssf.html>), which catalogs all the classic views of the area so that you can capture your favorite views.

Before visiting a location, send away for free literature. Most cities and countries have convention and visitor bureaus or tourist boards that are happy to send you free booklets with color photos. Color travel guides and picture books include numerous photos. I find the Internet is great for pre-trip research. In any search engine, simply type in some key words, such as "California, San Diego, Tourism, Travel." I maintain a list of useful sites on my web site at *photosecrets.com*.

When you arrive at a location, scour postcard racks and souvenir photo books, visit local tourist information offices, and talk with hotel staff and taxi drivers to learn what views are out there, waiting for your camera.

Before visiting India, I found a photo book with a fascinating view of the Taj Mahal, taken from the Yamuna River. When I got to the famed monument, no one knew how to access the river, including the tourist information staff. Eventually a taxi driver recognized the view and he agreed to take me there before dawn. We drove down a tiny alley and arrived at the riverbank, which was deserted except for a small house. Just as the sun began to rise, a man appeared from the house for a morning smoke. After asking his permission, I took a few photos of him enjoying his cigarette and the dawn. The shot, taken on my last amateur trip, is one of my favorites and won an honorable mention in a National Geographic Traveler photo contest.

3. Explore the Area

Before you start taking photos, get orientated by taking a 2-3 hour guided bus tour of the major sights. Use the time to make a list of the views you want to capture, and map out a plan to re-visit when each sight is in the best light. Generally, sights that face east are best in the morning,

as the sun rises in the east, and sights that face west are best in the afternoon. (In the Northern Hemisphere, south-facing sights are best in the winter, as the sun rises and sets towards the south, and north-facing sights are best in the summer, when the sun is more northerly.)

Take time to appreciate a sight. Most people tend to take one shot and then move on, but I recommend staying longer and exploring the scene with your camera. Search for interesting foregrounds and vary the framing and composition.

I was photographing Mission Dolores Church in San Francisco when a tour group came through. The tourists each took a few standard shots, and then departed. I stayed longer and explored the adjacent basilica and its flamboyant Spanish Baroque facade. I loved the mass of sugar-candy decoration and the way the sunlight picked out the texture. The extra time paid off - my shot of the basilica was picked for the cover of *The San Francisco Book*, the city's official visitor guide.

4. Include Personality

When I started publishing my travel photos, I noticed that picture editors were looking for one common element - people. Including one or two people in a shot adds a point of connection for the viewer, a sense of being there. It can also add a sense of scale to a vast landscape feature, such as the Grand Teton mountain range or Yosemite's towering waterfalls.

San Francisco's cable cars provide rich pickings, as people love to hang outside on the rail. The climbs up Hyde Street by Fisherman's Wharf, and California Street over Nob Hill, are my favorites. Attend festivals, and cultural or historic events and shows, where people are dressed in colorful, photogenic costumes.

5. Strive for Variety

Variety is the spice of life - and photography. Think how your photos will look as a group and shoot accordingly. Try to vary your styles, mix wide-angle overviews and individual details, daytime and night, portraits and abstracts.

When researching a city, I search for subjects in several categories, such as icons, skylines, monuments, buildings, people, street scenes, festivals, places of worship, lakes and oceans, food, etc. Look for unusual views of familiar things, as well as views that combine several icons. In London, for example, I tried combining British icons, such as a pub and an old telephone box. Remember that when you show your photos to friends and family, you'll be telling a story. So include shots of the more 'ordinary' parts of your trip, such as signs, transportation, and restaurants to illustrate your story and provide variety.

I hope that these tips give you some new ideas to try out on your next adventure. They've certainly improved my photography. Just keep in mind what Proust (almost) said to travel photographers: don't just seek new landscapes but seek them with new eyes.

Treasures of California

My Favorite Places to Photograph in the Golden State

By Andrew Hudson

It's fitting that California was originally a mythical land of treasure. In 1510, a Spanish adventure novel, *Las Sergas de Espandian*, described "an island called California" that was rich with gold, gems and pearls. When a Spanish ship sailed west from Mexico in 1534, the crew discovered a new land, with pearls on its southern beach. Hoping it was the mythical island of treasure, the Spanish named it Baja (southern) California.

Unfortunately for the Spanish, California was neither an island nor overflowing with gold. But perhaps the myth is partly true. Today's California is rich in treasure of another variety - visual sights - and it generously rewards today's explorer - the outdoor photographer. Here are some of my favorite natural, and man-made, treasures of California.

National Parks

Containing deserts and coastline, and the highest and lowest points in the contiguous U.S., California offers photographers the most impressive and varied range of national parks. Here are my favorites:

Yosemite National Park

The crown jewel of California, and indeed the nation's national park system, is of course **Yosemite National Park**. Yosemite Valley is a photographer's paradise, with verdant meadows, a dozen waterfalls, and sheer, half-mile-high granite walls that face the setting sun. It's synonymous with the most famous scenic photographer, *Ansel Adams*, who said: "I knew my destiny when I first visited Yosemite."

The classic view of Yosemite Valley is from Tunnel View (also known as Discovery View and Inspiration Point). You'll recognize it as Adams' famous "Clearing Winter Storm, 1944". Looking up the valley you can see El Capitan, Half Dome, Bridalveil Fall and Cathedral Rocks, all conveniently facing west towards the setting sun.

Late afternoon is best. Use a 35mm or 50mm lens for the full view, then a 100 to 200mm lens to concentrate on individual features such as El Capitan. The last sun rays of the day strike Half Dome and Cloud's Rest, for which you'll need a 300mm lens and tripod.

Yosemite Falls

This signature waterfall plunges 2,425 feet in three sections, making it the highest waterfall in North America. Facing south-east, Yosemite Falls is best photographed in the morning. My favorite view is from Cooks Meadow, by Sentinel Bridge, using a 100mm lens. Other good views are from the walking path which takes you right to the base of the Falls. April is the best month, at the peak of the spring run-off; by late summer the Falls often reduce to a trickle.

Vernal Falls

This is my favorite waterfall as it's photogenic and romantic. The best view is from the trail cutoff, between the Mist Trail and the John Muir Trail. Here, just above the crest, you gain its full power and magnificence. With a larger watershed, Vernal Fall stays active throughout the summer. Facing west, Vernal Fall is best in the afternoon. When the sun is behind you, vibrant waterfalls appear.

Kings Canyon and Sequoia National Parks

These adjoining parks are south of, and in the same mountain range (Sierra Nevada) as, Yosemite. Giant sequoia trees - earth's largest living thing on land - tower above you and pristine lakes reflect snow-capped mountains. There are twenty peaks over 12,000 feet including Mount Whitney, at 14,494 feet. Mostly accessible only to hikers and backpackers, the parks are an oasis of tranquility.

The most impressive collection of giant sequoias can be found at Giant Forest, in the southeast corner of Sequoia National Park. Nearby is the large Crystal Cave with chambers of creamy white stalagmites. In Kings Canyon park, the John Muir Trail winds past such views as Rae Lakes with Painted Lady in the background, and Evolution Lake with Mount Darwin in the background.

Other California Parks: Some of the other great photo ops in California parks include the following:

- **Alien landscapes.** Death Valley National Park; Lassen Volcanic National Park; Lava Beds National Monument; Joshua Tree National Park.
- **Coast redwood trees:** Redwood National Park and four nearby redwoods state parks; Muir Woods National Monument; Big Basin Redwoods State Park.
- **Waterfalls.** Besides Yosemite, McArthur-Burney Falls Memorial State Park and Julia Pfeiffer Burns State Park

San Francisco

For a travel photographer, there's no better subject than an icon. The Golden Gate Bridge is the most recognized structure west of the Mississippi and it immediately identifies San Francisco. The tall towers, elegant proportions and vibrant color ("International Orange") create a beautiful sight. The land on both sides, having been owned by the military, is largely undeveloped and provides a dozen view points from all around - north, south, east and west. My favorite is from the north-west.

Marin Headlands

This is the classic view, the photo you've always wanted to take. Here, on the northwest side, the bridge graced by the San Francisco skyline behind. It's a stunning sight and best in the afternoon.

By car, cross the bridge to the north side and take the second exit (after Vista Point) onto Alexander Avenue. Turn left under the freeway toward 101 South and, just before the road joins the freeway, take the only right turn, onto the plain-looking Conzelman Road.

There are actually three different viewpoints here. The first is Battery Spencer, a pullout on the left. A hundred-yard walk brings you to a breathtaking view. You're so close that a wide-angle 24mm lens is required.

About 3/4 of a mile further up Conzelman Road is a small pull-out with a tree and bench, overlooking Kirby Cove. This is where you can get a tight shot of the North Tower with the Transamerica Pyramid behind. Use a 300mm to 600mm lens, and a firm tripod. A 2x convertor would also be useful.

At the top of Conzelman Road, just by the tunnel, is a fabulous panoramic view of the entire span. Use a 50mm or 35mm lens with a polarizer if there's a blue sky. A clear day is required, which is more likely in the winter.

[Bodie Ghost Town](#)

Moving east from San Francisco, you'll find the best-preserved and most authentic ghost town in the country. Bodie State Historic Park is so remote that no-one, other than park rangers, lives here, or anywhere nearby. With its lack of color and wealth of textures, Bodie is a treasure for anyone who enjoys black and white photography.

About 170 mostly dark wooden buildings (only 5 percent of the original town) stand in a barren area of high-desert, uncommercialized and preserved in a state of "arrested decay" since the 1880s. Schoolbooks and desks lie in the one-room schoolhouse, grocery tins line a store's shelves, and original tools sit in the Mine Union building. You can enter a few buildings but most are only accessible with a special pass or on a private photography workshop. Call 760-647-6445 for a list of workshops.

Early morning is best, when the long shadows enhance texture and before the day gets too hot. Use a polarizer and, for color shots, a slight warming filter such as an 81A.

Bodie is east of Yosemite on Highway 270, a 13-mile, partly dirt track road off Highway 395. It's 7 miles south of Bridgeport and 18 miles north of Lee Vining. Summer is fiercely hot and the park often closes during winter snowstorms.

[San Diego Zoo](#)

Yes it's a little obvious but the San Diego Zoo is a great place to take photos. The major exhibits have two great features - landscaped surroundings and no bars. With only a moat or glass

between you and the animals, you can get close-up, natural-looking photos. A 200-300mm lens is best here. As with people, crop tightly into the face for a powerful shot. The animals are often moving so an autofocus camera is useful. A tripod is more trouble than it's worth, instead use a wall or handrail for support.

The star attractions are Bai Yun and Shi Shi, the only pair of giant pandas in the U.S. Generally shy, the pandas are most active in the morning, particularly at feeding time. Other good subjects are Indo-Chinese tigers, North Chinese leopards, Sumatran orangutans, pygmy chimps, lowland gorillas, Baringo giraffes, Galapagos tortoises, hippos, polar bears, and the unofficial symbol of San Diego, the Queensland koalas. Look out for Onya-Birri, a rare albino baby koala.

Thirty miles further north is the Zoo's second campus, the San Diego Wild Animal Park. At this more expansive facility, the roles are reversed - people are enclosed while the animals roam free in entire herd and flocks. My favorite feature here is the Photo Caravan. A safari truck takes you not around the enclosures but through them. You can photograph reticulated giraffes and great Indian rhinos as they come right up to the truck and eat from your hand. You can also photograph northern and southern white rhinoceros, Hartman's mountain zebra, white-bearded gnu, Kenya impala, Cape and water buffalo, Persian goitered gazelle, Roosevelt's gazelle, and sable antelope. You'll need to switch quickly between a 24-35mm lens for the giraffes that come to the truck, and a 200-300mm lens for the other animals that roam the 2,200-acre savannah.

[San Diego Photo Ops](#)

The 1999 NANPA Summit will be held in San Diego, California. In his new book, *PhotoSecrets San Diego*, Andrew Hudson recommends these top four nature photography opportunities:

Balboa Park. This 1,200-acre city park contains a variety of gardens, wilderness areas and hiking trails. Florida Canyon Native Plant Reserve makes for a pleasant hike. The Botanical Building contains over 300 species of tropical and subtropical plants. I like the Desert (cacti) Garden and Rose Garden, by the Space Museum.

Cabrillo National Monument. This 400-foot high peninsular is one of the best places on land in Southern California to watch migrating whales. Park rangers provide information at the Whale Overlook. There are also tide pools, a nature trail, two lighthouses, and great views of San Diego Bay. Best in the morning.

Torrey Pines State Reserve. The only publicly-accessible reserve for one of the world's rarest trees - the Torrey pine (*Pinus torreyana*). There are many trails through the 1,750-acre Reserve. My favorite is Broken Hill Trail which leads you to the rugged coastal view of Broken Hill (best at sunrise, although the park opens at 8am). North of La Jolla.

Anza-Borrego Desert State Park. About one-third of San Diego County is preserved as public wilderness areas. An 80-mile drive east of San Diego brings you to Anza-Borrego, the largest state park in the contiguous United States. The Park contains more than 600 species of plants, 500 miles of dirt track, and 12 wilderness areas. You can photograph palm groves, cacti, eroded

landscapes and sweeping views. From late February through March (depending on the rains), the desert can explode with color from the blooms of wildflowers.

Resource List

For more information on California and its photo locations, contact:

- **California:**
[California Division of Tourism](#) Tel: 800-862-2543
[California State Parks](#) Tel: 916-653-6995
- **National Parks:**
[U.S. National Parks](#) Tel: 202-208-4747
[Yosemite National Park](#): Tel: 209-372-0200
[Sequoia and Kings Canyon national parks](#) Tel: 209-565-3708
[Book about Yosemite](#)
- **San Francisco:**
[San Francisco Visitor Information](#) Tel: 415-391-2000
[Golden Gate Bridge](#) Tel: 415-921-2331
[Book about San Francisco](#)
- **Bodie Ghost Town:**
[Bodie State Historic Park](#) Tel: 760-647-6445
- **San Diego:**
[San Diego Zoo](#) Tel: 619-234-3153 (Photo Caravan: 619-738-5022)
Balboa Park: 619-239-0512; Botanical Building: 619-692-4916. [Cabrillo National Monument](#) 619-557-5450.
[Torrey Pines State Reserve](#) 619-755-2063.
[Anza-Borrego](#) Park: 760-767-5311; Wildflower hotline: 760-767-4684.
[Book about San Diego](#)

What's In The Bag (1998)

Andrew uses a Minolta X-700 camera, mainly on Aperture Priority (AE) mode, with three Minolta lenses - 24-35mm f3.5, a 50mm f1.7, and a 100-300mm f5.6. Favorite lengths are 28mm and 300mm. Accessories include a Tiffen polarizer filter for blue skies, a Bogen/Manfrotto 3228W tripod, and a Lowepro Mini Trekker bag. His film choice is Fujichrome Velvia (ISO 50) for its rich, vibrant colors.

The Best Photo Tip I Ever Got

The Atom Philosophy

By Bob Couey

A world class photographer and college professor once said to me:

"Bad (or lackluster) photos are caused from laziness. Unfortunately, too many photographers, amateurs to professionals, will approach a photo assignment with a pre-conceived notion of attack - mostly from 'history of style' and wanting to play it safe. Rarely, will the photographer step back, put down the camera and size up the assignment before proceeding. Instead, many of us will execute the photo from the angle we initially approached the subject, never thinking to study the subject and its environment first.

"Look at it like this," he continued. "The subject you wish to photograph is the nucleus of an atom. You, the photographer, are the electron spinning around the subject until you find just the right angle and distance. Not until then will you have successfully evaluated every aspect of that subject and its possibilities." He added, "Just the slightest move to the right or left, up or down has the potential to make or break the photo. Don't be in such a hurry to finish and leave."

That observation affected how I look at photography more than any other instructor, class, course, seminar or guest speaker, before or since. In fact, long ago, I based my "photographic vision" on this wonderful tip. But what's more important; that professor suffered from the crippling effects of adult polio. And even with that affliction (and in his 60s), he still employed the "atom" philosophy with all the vigor of an athlete.

Photo © 1999-2006 Sea World, Inc. Used with permission.

Killer Whale and Trainer

Shooting from above turns this photo into a graphic interpretation. Here we're dealing with color, light and shadow. We don't see the trainer's expression but her obvious surprise is left to our imagination. It's simple, calm, almost passive.

Try and view your subject from every angle, like an electron moving around an atom, before taking a photo.

Planning and Patience

By Bob Couey

Far be it from me to be patient.

Like many other photographers, I want to get the shot and get it now! But if I've learned anything as a SeaWorld /wildlife photographer, it's that I can blaze a hundred shots in "chance" shooting and capture mediocre to good photos, or, I can plan my shot beforehand and get an awesome image within a single roll. It's quality over quantity.

But can animal, people and action photos, with so much variability, be planned? Sort of.

Photos can't always be planned but there's so much potential for great images when any kind of preparation is possible. Removing as many variables as possible is key.

Test: Whenever possible, photograph the subject area before the actual photo shoot and check results first. You may discover, for instance, that the time of day you chose is not ideal for the particular setup. Furthermore, a close look at the processed film could indicate challenges you might not have prepared for. During this test, it's also the time to try different focal length lenses which will no doubt alter the "feel" of the photo.

Evaluation: Now you can decide what gear you'll need, including supplementary lighting if it's necessary. Sketching your photo in a "thumbnail" prior to shooting can help define what you're after in the finished image.

Execution: Where action, animals and kids are concerned, sometimes "best laid plans" are not enough and most amateur to professional photographers can offer countless horror stories about their experiences here. Still, nothing takes the place of preparation. Remember to remain flexible and if the shot doesn't work out (this time), you might have learned how to handle yet another variable.

All it takes is a little planning and patience.

Photo © 2000-2006 Sea World, Inc.

Used with permission.

Planning and Patience

This image was planned a week before the actual photo shoot. I had photographed this scene several times before but never captured the contrast between large and small, innocent and ferocious. Understanding my dilemma, and writing it down, helped me come to a workable solution: I needed a single, small child (not an entire family) framed by the huge polar bear.

I had observed the natural light at Sea World's Wild Arctic attraction several times and decided that early morning light provided a hard backlight (and ethereal quality) that helped to separate

the subjects against the background. But to keep the photo from becoming a total silhouette, I tested a small fill flash first to make sure it would add enough front light. Again, a quick check of the test roll helped nail down the lighting. The small girl's outfit was pre-selected to add color to an otherwise monochromatic scene. Her pigtails add to the innocence and gives the scene even more "psychological contrast."

So far, so good. Most variables removed, I asked the model to "perch" herself on the ledge of the exhibit and wait for the bears to come over. The girl was directed to smile and "always stare at the bear's nose." To entice the bears to stand at the viewing glass, Sea World animal handlers applied cream cheese (a polar bear treat) to the window.

Within moments, bears arrived at the glass and I had my photos in 10 frames and three seconds. Although so much of my success depended upon the polar bears (who don't take good direction), planning took most of the guesswork out of this setup.

How To Publish and Sell Your Photos

Publish

[How To Put Your Photos On The Web](#)

[How To Make Photo Prints and Gifts](#)

[Making a Photo Album or Journal](#)

[Find A Publisher For Your Book](#)

[How To Self-Publish A Book](#)
I did it, so can you!

Sell

[How To Sell Your Photos](#)
Start here

[Where To Sell Your Photos](#)

[How To Sell Your Photo As A Postcard](#)

[Become A Postcard Photographer](#)
An interview with James Blank

[The Business of Postcard Photography](#)

[Sell Your Photo To A Magazine](#)

[Stock Photography](#)
Make money from old photos

[Become A Travel Stock Photographer](#)
An interview with Brett Shoaf

[Photos You Can't Sell](#)

Law

[Photography Law](#)
By Dianne Brinson

[How To Copyright A Photo](#)